

Application No.: 10/656,736  
Docket No.: SS3335 US DIV 1

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**Amendments to Claims**

Claims 1-26 (Cancelled).

27. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for heat-treating a sheet material comprising:

a first heating zone;

a second heating zone; and

a tension isolation means disposed between the first and second heating means zones, wherein the tension isolation means applies tension to the sheet as it is conveyed through the first heating zone and causes a reduction in tension on the sheet as the sheet exits the tension isolation means and is conveyed through the second heating zone.

28. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 27 wherein the tension isolation means comprises serpentine rolls.

29. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 27 wherein the tension isolation means comprises a nip formed by two rolls.

30. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 27 wherein the first heating zone comprises an air-impingement dryer.

31. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 30 wherein the second heating zone comprises a source of heated air, a porous surface for supporting the sheet material and a vacuum source located below the porous surface for pulling the heated air through the sheet material and the porous surface to pin the sheet material to the porous surface.

32. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 31 wherein the second heating zone is a vacuum belt oven.

Claims 33-35 (Cancelled).